ALERT

News from the UFMCC
on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment.

May 1994

MCC of The Rockies Hires Case Manager for AIDS Ministry

Rev. Frank Beard, the Minister of Pastoral Care and Evangelism for MCC of the Rockies, successfully applied for Ryan White Title One Funds. As a result, on April 1, MCC of the Rockies hired Ms. Rose Montoya as a three-quarter time case manager of support services for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Rev. Beard reports that some persons with HIV/AIDS cannot go to the Colorado AIDS Project for case management, because that agency has a requirement that a person's CD4 count be below 250 in order to receive services. "We don't have a t-cell count requirement," says Rev. Beard. "And there are a number of people who are sick with counts above 250. So Rose's job is to get these people in touch with services already in place." The grant will pay her salary for a year, and Rev. Beard hopes to renew the grant.

Ms. Montoya has most recently worked for the community Health Foundation of East Los Angeles, CA, where she was also active in AIDS education. Originally from Denver, she returned home to care for her mother after a family tragedy last year. Ms. Montoya speaks both Spanish and English.

Ms. Rose Montoya

Rev. Beard is very excited about the addition of Rose Montoya to the staff of MCC of the Rockies. "We're now able to reach a community our church has never been able to reach before. The church is often the first place they show up." Rev. Beard says that he now sees 10-15 people a month for issues related to living with HIV/AIDS.

MCC of the Rockies also has a Tuesday night support group for persons living with HIV/AIDS, and that has been in place for several years. They have an average attendance of about a dozen. Lay person Brent Barry is the facilitator.

Other HIV/AIDS-related activities at MCC of the Rockies include the recent visit of Alison Arngrim and Rev. Steve Pieters. (see related story, pg. 2).

Rev. Beard is also applying for two other Ryan White Title 2 funds, to pay for a mental health worker at the church, and another grant for emergency financial assistance for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

(continued on page 2)

"Choose Life"

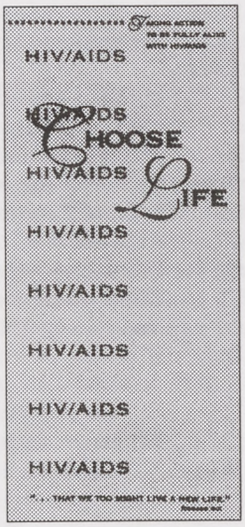
A New Resource From UFMCC AIDS Ministry

UFMCC AIDS Ministry has produced a new resource for persons living with HIV/AIDS. "Choose Life: Taking Action To Be Fully Alive with HIV/AIDS" was written by Rev. Steve Pieters, Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry.

The brochure outlines twelve action steps people can take in order to lead a greater quality of life with HIV/AIDS. Topics include meditation, prayer, nutrition, exercise, maintaining self-esteem, and nurturing faith.

The pamphlet was designed as a resource which a pastor, deacon or any person in AIDS ministry can hand to a person facing an HIV/AIDS diagnosis. Many of the steps outlined in the pamphlet to foster a quality life with HIV/AIDS come from the experiences of people who have survived HIV and AIDS since the earliest years of the epidemic.

The new pamphlet is available from UFMCC Church Services, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029 USA; phone (213) 464-5100; or fax (213) 464-2123. ▼



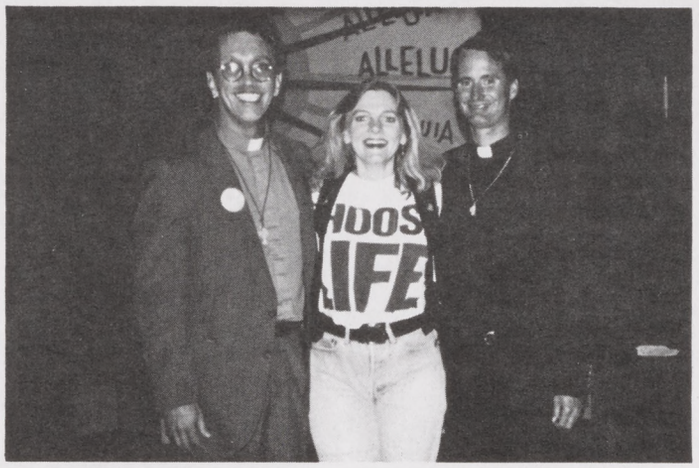
Arngrim & Pieters On The Road Again

MCC of the Rockies and MCC Family in Christ shared Alison Arngrim and Rev. Steve Pieters during a recent weekend visit to Colorado. Ms. Arngrim, best known as "Nasty Nellie Oleson" on the TV hit, "Little House on the Prairie," is now an AIDS activist and educator, following the 1986 death of her TV co-star, Steve Tracy. Rev. Pieters is the Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry, and a long-term survivor of AIDS.

Friday evening, at MCC of the Rockies in Denver, Steve introduced Alison, who served as M.C. for a cabaret featuring local singing talent and benefiting the church's AIDS Ministry, as well as a local support program for persons with HIV/AIDS. At the conclusion of the musical entertainment, Ms. Arngrim performed her stand-up comedy act. The audience never stopped laughing, and formed a long line for autographs following the program.

Saturday, Arngrim and Pieters held a workshop at Colorado State University, as part of the University's Bi-sexual/Gay/Lesbian awareness week. The workshop title was "Laughing Through the Barriers: Gays and Straights Working Together in the AIDS Crisis." Later that evening, Pieters held a workshop on "Spiritual Strength for Survival" at the Ft. Collins MCC Family in Christ.

Sunday, the duo delivered a dialogue sermon, "Choose Life," at the two morning services of MCC of the Rockies. Following a church brunch, the pair did their workshop on "Laughter and Healing."



Rev. Steve Pieters, Ms. Alison Arngrim, and Rev. Mark Lee, Pastor of MCC Family in Christ.

They were then driven to Ft. Collins where they delivered their dialogue sermon again to MCC Family in Christ.

The weekend was judged an enormous success by both churches. Arngrim and Pieters are also scheduled to bring their message to Christ Chapel MCC, Santa Ana, CA; Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert, Lancaster, CA; MCC Silverlake, Los Angeles, CA; and MCC San Diego, CA. ❐

International AIDS Candlelight Vigil Scheduled for May 22

Metropolitan Community Churches all over the world will join with AIDS activists, caregivers, and persons living with HIV/AIDS on May 22 for the 11th annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization.

UFMCC is once again a co-sponsor of the international event, which is organized by Mobilization Against AIDS, based in San Francisco. This year, Mobilization Against AIDS (MAA) has been joined by the Global AIDS Action Network (GAAN), a new international AIDS advocacy organization founded by former MAA executive director, Paul Boneberg, as coordinator of the event. Under the auspices of MAA, GAAN will coordinate all non-U.S. observances of the event. MAA will coordinate all U.S. observances, and will continue to oversee the entire program.

The 1993 Candlelight was observed in 225 cities in over 50 nations. President and Mrs. Clinton participated by lighting candles in the White House windows. Irish President Mary Robinson delivered the keynote address at the Dublin observance. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra performed outdoors at the Wellington observance. African National Congress President Nelson Mandela and Diana, Princess of Wales, issued statements of support.

This year, approximately 230 cities in 45 nations will participate. ▼

MCC of The Rockies...

(continued from page 1)

MCC of the Rockies has already won a grant through FEMA (the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration) for emergency housing for persons with HIV/AIDS. Because of these funds, MCC of the Rockies can place someone in a motel for up to four nights, while they make more permanent arrangements.

Rev. Beard learned to write grants from his friend, Rev. Keith Chesney, a Presbyterian pastor. Rev. Chesney and his lover, Ray Klienjohn, both died from complications of HIV, but they left their entire estate to MCC of the Rockies, to provide low income housing for persons with HIV/AIDS. The church has formed a new corporation, Chesney/Kleinjohn Housing, Inc., in order to construct a new building with 15-20 apartments for persons with HIV/AIDS. Rev. Beard says, "They will be able to move in when they're still healthy, and stay there until they die. There is nowhere else in Denver where there is a dedicated facility for this." Support services for persons in the apartments will hopefully be provided through Rose Montoya's case management. ▼

ALERT

ALERT is a monthly newsletter containing information on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment. The Editor is Rev. Dr. A. Stephen Pieters. For more information, please write: ALERT, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

Glimmering Hope, Resilience Revived

(By the Rev. Randy A. Lester)

{The following poem was written by Rev. Randy Lester a week after the non-AIDS related suicide of a close friend. Rev. Lester pastors MCC of the Central Coast in San Luis Obispo, California. He served as Chaplain/Pastor of MCC at the California Men's Colony (a state prison) for nearly four years. In addition, Rev. Lester volunteered as an MCC representative in the Del Norte Unit (HIV+ inmates) at the California Institution for Men in Chino. He and his life-partner, Ryan, live with their two Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs, Hamilton Beach and Remington Steele, in Grover Beach, CA.}

We,
Your hurting people,
bound together in our loss;
broken hearts, silent tears, hushed agony,
undiscovered dreams.
We,
Your peculiar people,
--oppressed, suppressed, depressed
lifted up to Your presence -- not apart from;
but a part of that which touches our lives.
We,
A dying people,
the pros, hustlers, addicts, gays, inmates, bisexuals,
women; (sometimes) not as valued as:
the babies, hemophiliacs, transfusion recipients.
We,
A tired people,
weary from burying our sisters and brothers,
fathers and mothers, infants and others;
losing count of the numbers,
forgetting some of the names, always remembering
that all were taken -- before their time.
We,
a surviving people,
thriving on determination,
gut-level will power -- previously unknown fortitude.
We,
a believing people;
holding onto a thread of hope,
an ounce of prevention, a hint of cure.
We,
a faithful people;
daring to believe that love -- Yours and ours,
can and does bring healing.
We,
a gentle people;
sensitive to wounded spirits, unreplenished souls,
-- wandering minds and bodies.
We,
Your triumphant people;
carrying the gospel of bright-rare-tomorrows,
into: Immune Suppression Units, prisons, nurseries,
hospices, and recovery programs.
We,
ordinary people;
with a "story to tell to the nations" of "Amazing Grace"
and to say -- in spite of it all --
"It Is Well With My Soul!" ▼

MCCLA Contract With Bienestar

MCC Los Angeles has entered a contractual arrangement with Bienestar, a local HIV/AIDS service agency for the Hispanic community of Los Angeles. Rev. Jose Marcos Gonzalez is now offering 11 hours a week of spiritual counseling for Spanish-speaking persons with HIV/AIDS at Bienestar. Rev. Gonzalez has the added responsibility of offering pastoral support for the friends and family of persons with HIV/AIDS referred to him.

In speaking with ALERT, Rev. Gonzalez expressed great excitement about this new challenge, but also reflected on how draining AIDS ministry can be. Rev. Gonzalez has already been ministering to many persons with HIV/AIDS within his own congregation, and is finding a tremendous need for pastoral support services at Bienestar, as well.

Rev. Gonzalez is the Associate Pastor of MCC Los Angeles. He is in charge of the Church's Latin Ministry. ▼

Perry to Speak at U.S. National Lesbian/Gay Health Conference & AIDS Forum

Rev. Elder Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of UFMCC, will be a keynote speaker at a plenary session of the U.S. National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference. He will share the dias with Martin Duberman and Barbara Gittings, discussing "The History of the Lesbian and Gay Movement." This plenary session will be held Wednesday evening, June 22, from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

The Conference, which includes the 12th Annual AIDS/HIV Forum, will take place June 21-25, 1994 in New York City. Concurrent to the Gay Games IV, and culminating with all the celebrations and pride demonstrations of Stonewall 25, the conference features over 200 workshops in 7 tracks: AIDS/HIV Forum, Lesbian and Gay Health, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Strategies for Inclusion, Prevention, and Research.

In addition, on June 21, there will be full-day, intensive institutes on such subjects as Gay and Lesbian Youth, People of Color, Domestic Violence, Lesbian Health, Sexual Abuse, Grant Writing, and Lesbian and Gay Mental Health.

To receive more information and a preregistration brochure, write NLGHF Conference, c/o The George Washington University Medical Center, Office of Continuing Medical Education, 2300 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. ▼

Women and AIDS Regional Conference: "The Future is Now!"

A regional conference focusing on women and HIV/AIDS will be held May 18-22, 1994 in Detroit, MI, USA. The conference will address issues of concern to women, including medical, psychosocial, family, and psychological concerns. HIV-positive women and their caregivers, service providers, administrators, physicians, nurses, social workers, clergy and other professionals working with women with HIV and their families are suggested participants.

For information and registration, write "Women & AIDS Conference Registration," Detroit Health Department, HIV/AIDS Programs, 1151 Taylor, Detroit, MI 48202, or call (800) 409-9494; or (313) 876-4536. ▼

U.S. AIDS Lobbying

Washington, D.C., May 22-24, 1994

Local Districts May 29 - June 6, 1994

(reprinted with permission from "AIDS Treatment News", Issue #197, Apr. 15, 1994)

This year's AIDSWatch Lobby days "is dedicated to securing greater AIDS program funding in Congress during the appropriations cycle, with a focus on health care reform that will be beneficial for people living with HIV disease. The goal is to have representation from every Congressional district."

Those who cannot go to Washington for the May 22-24 events can help locally by lobbying their U.S. Representative and Senators during the Congressional recess, May 29-June 6.

For more information about either the Washington or the local district efforts, call Lisa Ragain, National Association of People With AIDS, 202/898-0414; or if you are affiliated with one of the groups below, call them directly. This project is coordinated by NAPWA, and sponsored by: AIDS Action Council; AIDS National Interfaith Network; AIDS Policy Center for Children, Youth, and Families; AIDS Project Los Angeles,; American Foundation for AIDS Research; CAEAR Coalition; Housing Works; Human Rights Campaign Fund; Mobilization Against AIDS; Mothers' Voices; National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors; National Community AIDS Partnership; National Hemophilia Foundation; National Minority AIDS Council; National Native American AIDS Prevention Center; Project Inform; San Francisco AIDS Foundation; Treatment Action Group; and the Whitman Walker Clinic.

California: AIDS Budget Day
May 16

California's Fourth annual AIDS Budget Lobby Day, consisting of a briefing on the California AIDS budget, a rally on the Capitol steps, and meetings with legislators and legislative staffs, will be Monday, May 16, from 10 am to 4 pm at the State Capitol in Sacramento. This event is sponsored by major AIDS organizations in both Northern and Southern California, and by Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California.

For more information, call 415/864-5855 x2537 (Northern California) or 213/993-1374 (Southern California). ▼

Sustained T-Helper Count Rise in Three-Drug Combination

AIDS Treatment News (Issue #194, March 4, 1994) reports on an Italian study which found "that a three-drug combination of AZT, alpha interferon, and thymosin alpha 1 resulted in a large increase in T-helper cell count, sustained for at least 18 months, in patients who started with a T-helper count between 200 and 500." ATN cautions that the study used a small sampling of patients, and there is no proof yet that the combination treatment had any clinical benefit: "no one in either the treatment or the control arms (of the study) progressed to AIDS." Italy has started a larger study of the protocol.

ATN further notes, "the two-drug combinations of AZT plus alpha interferon, or AZT plus thymosin alpha 1, seemed to work much less well than the three-drug combination, although better than AZT alone." ▼

AIDS, Medicine & Miracles Expands to 3 sites

The seventh annual "AIDS, Medicine and Miracles" conference will be held in three locations in 1994.

Reggie Williams will be the keynote speaker at the Rhinebeck, New York conference June 2-5. Deepak Chopra, M.D. will keynote the San Francisco conference July 14-17. Joan Borysenko, Ph.D., will deliver the keynote address in Boulder, Colorado, September 29 - October 2.

The conference theme this year is "What Holds Promise: Caring, Community, Coalition." A broad range of workshops and speakers will include topics such as grief and loss, sexuality and intimacy, addiction issues, death and dying, women's treatment issues, spirituality in healing, nutrition and HIV, and attitudinal healing.

For registration forms or information, contact "AIDS, Medicine, & Miracles," P.O. Box 9130, Maxwell Building, 311 Mapleton, Boulder, CO 80301-9130, or call 800/875-8770 or 303/447-8777. ▼

HIV News From Australia

Rev. Greg Smith, District Coordinator of UFMCC's Australian District, reports from Sydney that there is a new call by some doctors in New South Wales to force anyone undergoing invasive surgical procedures to be tested for HIV.

The controversy pits the president of the New South Wales Australian Medical Association, Dr. Michael Eagleton against the president of the Federal AMA, Dr. Brendan Nelson. Nelson supports the current policy, which suggests voluntary testing before surgery. Eagleton wants a policy which would allow a surgeon to order an HIV test on anyone undergoing an invasive surgical procedure. If the patient refuses, the surgeon could refuse to treat the patient, under Eagleton's proposal.

Those who oppose Eagleton point out that universal precautions against all blood-borne infections should be the priority in prevention of needle-stick injuries. They further argue that compulsory testing would be an attempt at discrimination by doctors who don't want to take responsibility for precautionary procedures. There is currently no law enforcing universal infection control procedures in Australia.

In other news, public housing for persons living with HIV or AIDS (PLWHAs, in Australian gay periodicals) has increased, with the Waverly Council and the New South Wales Department of Housing collaborating. The project, budgeted at $1.2 million, will house eight positive people, as well as live-in caregivers. ▼